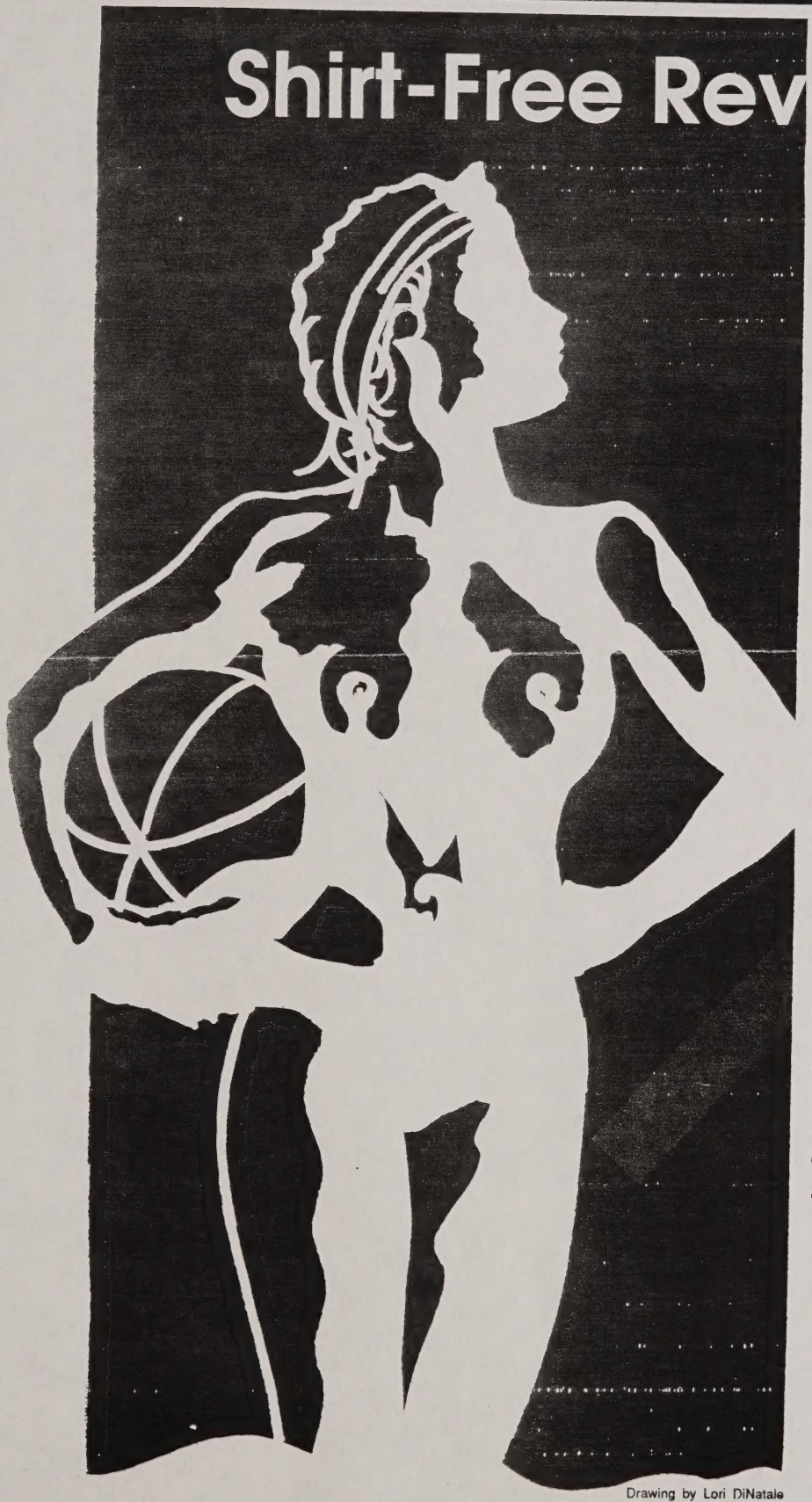
Anti-Semitism
Why Now?.....p.3

THE EDGE

Boycott Alert
Tuna Boycott Working
.....p.4

October 1990 | Volume 1, Number 9 | Free And Open

Shirt-Free Revolution



Drawing by Lori DiNatale

Fifty years ago men were not allowed by law to be shirt-free, but because men control the law, they got the laws changed. Still in the 1990s womyn are not treated equally. When a womon is shirt-free she is subjected to harassment and legal repercussions. The time has come for this to change. Womyn are demanding to be treated equally, and not just under the law. No longer will womyn accept the position of second class citizen. We are fighting on all levels for the freedom to control our bodies and our lives.

See Special Pullout Section

Shirt-Free Revolution

We are Dawn, Laurie and Marcia, the three womyn who were ticketed on Aug. 4 for disorderly conduct for refusing to put on our shirts at B.B. Clarke beach. On Aug. 27 we appeared in traffic court and pled "not guilty" to the charges and organized a protest march which commenced at noon that day in front of the Dane County courthouse.

Estimates ranged from 30 to 150 participants in the "Shirt-Free and Safe" parade which started while downtown workers and students were outside eating their lunch. We went from the courthouse, around the Capitol Square, down State Street and ended up at Library Mall on campus, stopping periodically to rap, drum, dance and celebrate. It was truly a magical day with an almost tribal feel to it.

The day was perfect for the occation; hot and humid -- the kind of day that makes it almost unbearable to keep your shirt on. And most of us didn't.

It was extremely hard for some womyn to take their shirts off. Even when you know that the rules and conventions are fucked that say womyn need to have their breasts covered, actually taking off your shirt can still bring up all the old fears.

But we were there, together, to challenge the ideology behind such fears. The best way to create a new society is to start living it. So much of society's controls over us are internalized and that is their greatest strength. When we begin to say, "No!" to the opressive messages inside our own hearts and heads, then and only then can we be effective and free.

On September 21 Assistant City Attorney Rick Petri attempted to plea bargain with our attorney Cevyn Godre by offering to reduce the charge against us to "excessive noise," and the fine from $151 to $61 each. But we are not bargaining. We feel that we did nothing wrong and are fighting this case to make this point loud and clear.

We now have three attorneys working on the case; Cevyn Godre, Tammy Baldwin and Jeff Olson. They will be filing motions to either get the case dismissed or bring it to trial. This will likely take some time. Stay tuned and thanks for all the support!

If you would like to help us out we would be very grateful. Since the legal process will be lengthy it is important to keep the dialogue going in the community by writing supportive letters to the editor of the daily papers. Although our lawyers have agreed to represent us *pro bono*, we still have to pay for ' out -of-pocket' expenses and possibly jury and witness fees. If you would like to contribute to our legal fund, please send a check made out to the Shirt-free Revolutionaries c/o *The Edge* , P.O. Box 3284, Madison, WI 53704.

The following is a collection of writings, interviews and artwork contributed by people who were at the beach the day we were ticketed or at the "Shirt-Free and Safe" parade.

When we have our safety and privacy invaded by living our lives in defiance of womon-hating laws, and when we have to educate people about these laws to try and change them, we will not back down.

Photo by Eric Alvin

Some people say we did it for the attention. Others say we're just another group of Madison "crazies." Maybe it is "crazy" to feel comfortable enough in your community and close enough to your friends to shoot societal taboos out the window and take off your shirt. But I did it for the freedom. Not such a crazy concept.

Women deserve the same freedoms as men have in our society. Even though the law (made by men, of course) does not protect men's and women's freedoms equally, I shall act as if it does. I do not accept this inequality and will not live as if I have fewer rights than men.

The media jumped on our story like white-collar workers swarm around a man giving away two-dollar bills. All of a sudden we became known across the country -- even as far away as Belgium! We have received much-needed support from our community. But we've also been the butt of jokes and recipients of all kinds of harassment.

Men have called me at home numerous times, making requests of me as if they thought I was a prostitute. One man told me that he would donate to our legal defense fund if I gave him a massage. This is a blatant attempt to take away my power and my feelings of security and it will not work.

When women defy their societal stereotypes of weakness and show how powerful we can be, even in the face of hostile police and gawking perverts, we shoot another arrow into the patriarchy. It will soon fall altogether.

Harassing phone calls, letters and physical violations are a last ditch attempt by some men to reassert their dominance over women who they (rightly) perceive to have taken some of their power away from them. Women will take what is theirs.

Laurie Burnstein

Sometimes you just can't be silent. Sometimes you just can't say, "that's the way it is." Sometimes you have to see the connections, speak your dissent and break the rules to keep on living. When the cops, and the laws in the name of "community standards," tell me and other womyn that the sight of our breasts causes disorder and disturbance and that we must alter our lives because others cannot control their reactions, they are going to be in for a fight.

As a womon my breasts do not cause uncontrollable (disorderly) sexual desire in men. As a womon I do not cause someone to rape me. As a womon I do not accept any law or convention or standard that encourages this blaming attitude that threatens my life and my freedom. I hold this country totally accountable to the principle of "freedom for all" it so eagerly espouses.

So when laws begin to enforce shame and self-hate in womyn, with regard to our bodies, we will no longer accept it. When I see womyn dying of anorexia and bulemia because we learn to hate our bodies, I will speak out. When I see capitalist industries of every kind profiting off the bodies of womyn, when I cannot even control how I live in my own body as a womon, I will rebel. When we have our safety and privacy invaded by living our lives in defiance of womyn-hating laws, and when we have to educate people about these laws to try to change them, we will not back down.

The revolution is here, people, and the womyn are ready. We've had enough. We are way past fear. We will fight on all levels. Our voices and bodies and creativity are coming together to celebrate, and protest, and fight, and love. Our power is intense, all we have to do is begin to use it. And we are.

Marcia Weisman

Hey you! Yeah you - second class citizen. The one we've named woman. You really are fucking insane, aren't you! Who the hell do you think you are, girl? What do you think you're "getting done?" Exposing yourself parading down the street. You are woman, under MAN, under GOD. But you've still learned nothing. Nothing from the witch hunts, nothing from the insane assylums, the chains, the lynchings. NOTHING! I - MAN - I'M the one who NAMED you! Who lets you enjoy as much freedom as you have. (Which obviously is more than you know what to do with.) You know, my dad was right. Give 'em an inch and you take a mile.

Hey you - litle boy red white and blue. I have two things to say.

One: Don't ever bring a knife to a gun fight. And two: We womyn - who by the way have re-named ourselves - have each other, our spirits, our lives, our love, and SHARE our power. With this fact keep in mind: Although YOU have the H bomb and the militia of countless blood-hungry fools, WE have each other, our power and strength and wisdom. Because our numbers are small, we are tighter, stronger, and much more powerful than you choose even to acknowledge. And with this fact, keep in mind that you will always be carrying a boy scout pocket knife into a room full of sharp shooters.

Dawn Howes

"I felt rage (at the beach) because, first two cops come to harass these womyn who don't have their tops on within five minutes after being called and ten minutes later there were two more. A cop threatened to arrest me because I was cursing. I said, 'You're gonna arrest me for cursing when some guy terrorized me for weeks and I was told over and over again that you can't do anything -- you can't arrest some guy just because he was following me around?' If they were going to arrest me, I was not going to go peacefully.

"Although this is supposed to be a free country, womyn are still treated like children, that we have to be protected and we can't make our own decisions. I'm really tired of being treated as a womon like I have no rights and 'moral crimes' are more important than violent crimes like men stalking womyn. Society is run by men. We have to challenge it and say NO!

"The fact is that we have a lot of power. We're just not utilizing it as much as we could because we've been taught to be afraid, that we'll be hurt. But we're hurt worse by not fighting than by fighting."

"I don't want to be in the public eye, but how can we live on our womyn ancestors' backs who fought and sometimes died for the rights we have now — to even wear pants or smoke cigarettes?"

A womon who's fighting back on the east side

A Day on the Beach...

Section 24.02 DISORDERLY CONDUCT. Whoever does any of the following within the limits of the City of Madison shall be subject to a forfeiture of not more than $200.
(1)In a public or private place, engages in violent, abusive, indecent, profane, boisterous, unreasonably loud or otherwise disorderly conduct under circumstances in which such conduct tends to cause or provoke a dirsturbance; or
(2)With intent to annoy another, makes a telephone call, whether or not conversation ensues.

I was hanging out with some friends at the beach. I had my shirt off that day, which was not unusual. After an hour I started feeling uncomfortable and I didn't know why. I noticed that there was this man hanging out and looking at us with binoculars so I covered myself, not because I was ashamed of my breasts or my body but because I didn't want to be objectified. I was willing to compromise my comfort rather than give him a free show.

That started a discussion among the group and we decided to turn the tables and watch him. It was quite obvious that what he was doing was watching women and little girls in and about the water.

One of the women from our group got up and challenged him on that. Since she was over there by herself I decided to go over there and give her some support, just in case he decided to get funky.

And he did. And we did. And the end result was that he called the law on us. So basically this whole thing was started because this low-life, dickless, pinhead brotherfucker had his voyeuristic pleasures interrupted.

And I thought to myself, this doesn't gel. There I am sitting in the sunshine enjoying myself. I wasn't threatening anyone, causing a disturbance or bouncing my breasts in a challenging manner. Yet this malevolent brotherfucker can sit there making everyone feel uncomfortable, violating our privacy and, as far as I was concerned, committing an immoral act, and still get supportive reaction from the police.

Within ten minutes four porkmobiles arrived as if our breasts were neutron bombs or something. It was like watching some really bad slasher movie. It was so unrealistic and bizarre that I felt like I wasn't even there -- that this just isn't happening -- that I can't be paying for this with my big funky taxes. It just really makes me want to...

I almost wish I could become a cop and change the system from the inside. But I know that could never happen because I don't have that penis thing happening, and especially after seeing what I saw that day. It makes me not want to call them even if I needed them because I feel that I would become a victim. They'll take me and lock me up and say that I'm just another hysterical woman because they often mistake passion for hysteria.

For example, I was driving to work and this guy was cutting me off, flipping me off and yelling, "Niggerbitch!" and just being an obnoxious asshole for no particular reason. I pulled into a service station and called the police. My car was new at the time so I didn't have my licence plates yet.

When the cop came and I told him the story, he didn't ask me anything about the man who was harassing me but he questioned me about my car and where I got the money to buy it. He asked me for my driver's license which was from California.

So I said, "What, a black woman can't drive a new car in Madison? What do you think, I'm on some kind of crime spree, that I flew all the way from California just to steal this car and then call you so you could arrest me because I'm some sort of weird psychopath and this is how I get off? If I'm going to steal a car, I'll steal one with a license plate, goofy." He said, "Well, we just like to be sure."

So I was victimized twice. Once by the asshole in the car and again by this cop. So the cop followed me to work. After that and after this incident at the beach I think it's best to protect myself. Because when they say, "To Protect and Serve," I'm not sure who they're talking about. I don't believe it's me.

Back to the beach...When the first two cops arrived, they weren't there to pacify the situation. They came there ready to fight and wield their penises. The black one, especially, (Wayne Strong) got on my fucking nerves. He came there ready to arrest these women. I felt that he wanted revenge against any woman that had ever pissed him off for any reason and that his behavior was totally inappropriate. He escalated the situation and didn't even want to hear the truth. He was not interested in justice at all. He should have handled the situation in a calmer manner and behaved as if he wanted to help. The problem could've been solved within a matter of minutes. The problem not being the women with their shirts off but the brotherfucker with the binoculars.

Glaonifer

Drawing by Lori DiNatale

Cops Will Be Co

by Ron Kaminkow

Returning to shore after a swim at B.B. Clarke Beach on August 4, I found a woman lambasting a man I had noticed earlier peering through a pair of binoculars. For the previous hour he had been focusing on the women present at the beach and had refused to quit, even when noticed, even when stared back at, even when given "the finger."

The woman, frustrated and consumed with anger at this man's blatantly disrespectful behavior, was too much for the voyeur. He grabbed his tools of the trade and left. But he was soon to return, along with the police.

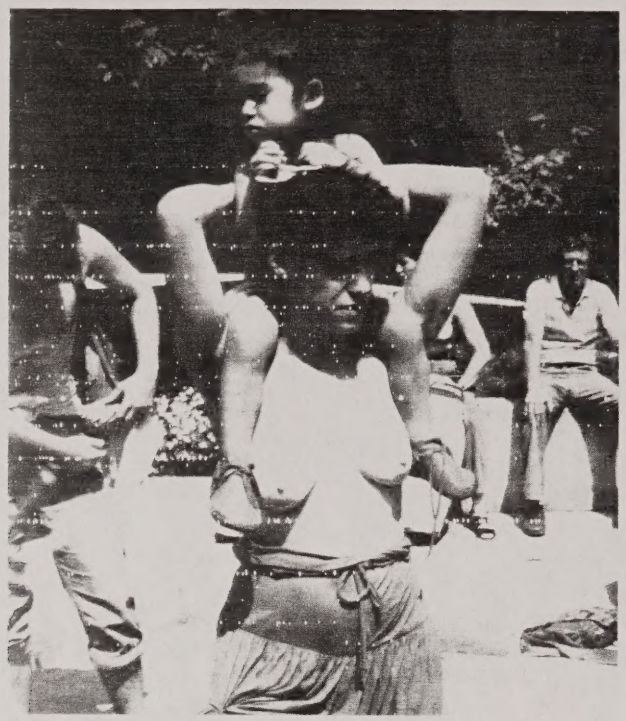
After quickly dismissing the issue of voyeurism and invasion of privacy, they proceeded to chastise a group of women, friends of the "uppity" one mentioned above, for having allegedly exposed their breasts. Just as the law will often focus on a rape victim's personality, actions, clothing, etc., the cops here seemed to be insinuating that the actions of these women invited disrespect and harassment from men with binoculars, and therefore they deserved what they got.

The cops thereby ducked the issue of harassment and ignored the fact that the man had been staring down all of the women on the beach, fully clothed or otherwise. In frustration finally, three women removed their shirts to make what I consider to be a crucial point -- that women have a right to be at the beach clothed or topless, and be free of harrassment.

The argument that followed, lasting well over an hour, could hardly be the job of a police officer, I thought. Neighbors who lived in the area expressed this view openly. The officers' sexism and authoritarianism got them into an awkward spot so they became even more confrontational and hostile.

In an attempt to get his way, one cop would sporadically threaten, "You're going to jail right now if...!" No one, not even onlookers, was safe from these threats. Having witnessed the event, I felt compelled to speak up when he threatened the women with charges of disorderly conduct. Although I spoke softly and non-threateningly, I was pounced on and also threatened with jail if I failed to leave the area. Welcome to Madison!

By this time, three police cars were on the scene. Three cars! Remarking on the overkill, one black woman noted how she had received no support from the police when her life was continu-



Photos by Rebecca Dixon

Into The Streets...

"I was outraged and upset about the tickets, and I wanted to support the cause. I thought the march was an effective way of protesting, womyn walking around without shirts on, and I wanted to be a part of that.

"Fear of harasment? I thought there would be harasment, but I didn't feel endangered by that. Maybe it's because I do theater. I'm used to putting myself out on the line and exposing yourself to people. I'm used to that aspect of it. I don't think it's right, but people will react in different ways. I was ready to hear it and deal with it.

"It did turn out to be a celebration. We all felt close to each other, dancing, drumming, singing and chanting along with the story of the whole thing. People came for that and joined in for that. We protested and celebrated.

"I think the theater of it worked well. I do improvisational, not regular traditional, theater. It's a lot freer and we work a lot through using our bodies and voices and masks. There were elements of all that there.

"I think the reactions of people were very interesting. There were a lot of different ones; negative comments, cynical comments, some people were really happy and exuberant, some people were wondering what the fuck, they were shocked. Some people were really not at all supportive. And there also seemed to be a lot of surprise - which I see as a positive thing.

"At the end I felt really angry and sad when I put my shirt back on, when I felt that I had to do that. That we couldn't go on doing that outside the realm of that experience. I think there should be more of this kind of thing. It shoudn't just be a one time deal. I would like the story to continue in general for all womyn in all sorts of situations. I don't know how that's going to come about, I'll have to do more thinking about that."

Barbara Vedder

I am a woman in search of freedom AND THAT IS NOT OFFENSIVE!!

I have eyes that need to be highlighted, lips that need to be colored. I have scars and blemishes that need to be disguised. My vagina is not clean - it needs to be douched and scented. My clitoris is never even to be mentioned. My breasts are sexual objects, and besides that, not firm enough. They need to be strapped in wires and hidden.

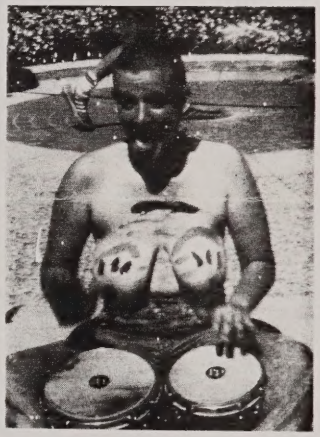
Like all women, I have been a target of this patriarchal propaganda all of my life. But hey, guys, I'M NOT BUYING IT ANYMORE!!

When I chose to take part in the "Shirt-free and Safe" rally and march, I was more nervous at first about how my breasts looked than I was about getting ticketed or arrested. That I have been so influenced by man's propaganda made me both sad and angry. I had to realize that the only one who has breasts like Barbie is Barbie herself. And hers are plastic! My breasts are real. They are unique, special, beautiful. They can be sexual (if I choose) and powerful. They have fed my baby. They have given me pleasure.

Women need to be able to be as shirt-free as men are. Yes, we want to be comfortable on a hot, muggy day. But we also need to publicly reaffirm that our bodies are not something to be hidden, disguised, or ashamed of.

My body is **mine**. I own it and control it and share it if I choose. I am a woman in search of freedom. AND THAT IS NOT OFFENSIVE!!

Michele McCoy



S

ally threatened earlier in the summer. A neighbor accross the road pointed out to the cops that rowdy drunken hooligans congregate on the beach but the police are nowhere to be found then.

Even two little girls noted the irony and in amazement asked the driver of the third car, "What do you need all these police cars for?" She remarked that at this rate, soon the entire street would be full of cops. To this, the officer confidently commented, "Wouldn't you feel safe then?" Reflecting what had undoubtedly been previous negative impressions of "the law," the two, no older than ten years old, chorused in unison wholeheartedly, "No!!!"

I expect that most people present shared their sentiments. And I expect that many people -- particularly women, minorities, and the economically disadvantaged -- do not take particular comfort in the presence of the police. Contrary to popular myth, "the law" is not a neutral arbitrator, but rather, is simply a reflection of the power structure that exists in society.

And sexist harassers are, well... you know, "boys will be boys."

"There is a traditional religious myth that women in and of themselves are evil and simultaneously a temptation and a threat to men's sexuality. Because of this religious myth that the patriarchal system perpetuates, we have created and bought into a rape culture that absolves men of taking responsibility for their feelings about women's bodies and creates a conflict in their minds regarding their desire for women. A society that wrongly justifies men blaming women for men's sexual actions and attitudes towards women."

"From my religious perspective, as a participant in the Goddess religon of paganism or wicca, I'm proud to be a woman. I'm proud to be in the body I'm in and if I want to dance naked around a fire I will. Not for the pleasure of men, not to be an exhibitionist, but because there is a lot of power in it, breaking free of those chains that bind me, all the moralistic shoulds that are out there."

We are all sisters, no type better than the rest. I'm tired of a society that defines the ideal woman by the shape of her body and the size of her breasts.

Tanya Randall is a mother, a priestess of the goddess religion, soon to be a Madison police officer, and an advocate for youth and battered women for the Dane county human service board.

This was the third time in a week I promenaded State Street with a group of others to display, proclaim, incite, invoke, perform and celebrate. The other times were the Men's Lingerie Liberation March and the Festival of the Swamps Public Imagination Parade.

The street belongs to everyone equally, or at least it does in theory. It is the perfect place to present one's most radical ideas.

Being bare-breasted in public is a radical idea only as contrived by civilization. For a bushwoman, putting on a shirt would be a radical idea because in that environment it would be so impractical as to be stupid. But western civilization doesn't view the bushwoman as a viable human being.

Thus NOVA can show a bare-breasted African woman on TV, but you wouldn't see a white woman's breasts bare. Except on MTV, maybe a millisecond flash, always in a seductive context. The hypocrisy and the double-standards are complex and sick and they are contrived and upheld by men, media and money.

My conviction about this issue made it easy for me to take my shirt off during the march and even walk back up State Street with several others. Am I ready yet to do this alone in public? Not until many of us do. It must become so widespread as to be taken for granted.

Let's remember: 40 years ago people were shocked to see a grown woman wearing pants in public. We fought it, we introduced it gradually, pretty soon the fashion industry caught on and helped it along, until today no one thinks twice about it. We can get the bare breast situation to this point, it will just take time and persistence. (I believe the same goes for men wearing skirts. It's already happening, in fact.)

This getting used to it is two-fold: The public must get used to seeing bare breasts and women must get used to being bare-breasted in public. Further, we all need to inherit the conviction and the feeling that there is absolutely nothing wrong with it.

My advice to those who wish to get to this point (and I include myself) is to start at home. If you're hot or uncomfortable with a shirt on, just take it off in your house. Eventually you will get used to visitors and they'll get used to you.

Don't be ashamed. If you are, question yourself, examine and expose your shame: it's not really yours, it's society's brainwash. Also examine the hidden voices in you when you see another bare-breasted woman. Are you embarrassed, hateful, jealous, confused? Ask yourself why. Find some rationale behind your feelings, or expose them as unfounded.

Elizabeth Was

Pop Up! No Tissue Issue

by Elizabeth Doyle

Before I even knew the words "womyn's issue," I loved taking off my shirt in private social situations and enjoying their presence. I find the amazing variety of shapes and sizes of womyn's breasts expresses the differing qualities of our nurturence and power. The happiness I connect with seeing breasts out there bouncing and smiling and dancing around comes from knowing where I came from. My mother's tits offered milk and it was her nipple I sucked to get food.

In the context of public "exposure," the nipple has become the most forbidden part of the breast while the rest of the breast tissue is much more acceptable.

Men also have nipples and some men even have more tissue than some womyn. So if we recognize that the endowment of these physical characteristics (although very differently qualified) applies to both genders, then the prejudice here is not a nipple tissue issue at all. It is a womon-hating culture problem. Laws like "disorderly conduct" enforce this hate with vague definitions of what is offensive or disturbing left to public judgement. YUCK!!!!

Yes, it is definitely time to nip-out and take those shirts off whether you are hot or not! When we demonstrate everywhere and anywhere the power and celebration of our own bodies, we demystify the advertising, pornographic, capitalistic market of exploitation of womyn's breasts and bodies. When WE decide to use their power of sensuality, nurturence and beauty, we end the appropriation of ourselves. I can see breasts popping up everywhere and patriarchy collapsing with dropped jaws. AWE....AAAAAHHHHH!!!!!

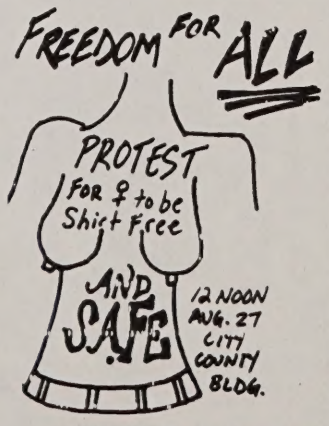
Womyn will continue to love and enjoy our breasts whether we are publicly private or privately public, making love, biting, sucking, nursing, filling, feeling, underneath cotton, polyester, water, wind, silk, or sun!!!!!!

happy, happy, happy breasts

MORAL FABRIC OR COTTON FABRIC?
YOU'RE DESTROYING THE MORAL FABRIC THAT MADE THIS COUNTRY GREAT!
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY SOME OF THIS FABRIC. LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED IT MORE THAN I DO.
ANDREA SAMARAI

Drawing by Andrea Samarai

Photo by Eric Alvin



Drawing by Dawn Howe

I went to the rally supporting wimmin's right to be shirt-free and safe in Madison because I was sick and tired of being bombarded by pornography at every turn. Why are shirtless wimmin okay if they are photographed and sold in Seven-Eleven and not okay if they are real and bare at the beach?

The answer is spelled M-I-S-O-G-Y-N-Y! Womon-hating! To the chant at the rally of, "Hey Hey! Ho Ho! The double-standard has got to go!" another Lesbian Separatist I know replied, "Double-standard? No. Miscgyny!" I hasten to agree.

Death to the hetero-patriarchy. Long loving life to Lesbians!

Mary A. Schumacher

It was really important to me that we did the shirt-free protest. In hot weather men can wear only little shorts, while womyn usually only feel comfortable with two layers of clothing over their chests. Check out the "leaders" of our world at their workplaces. Men wear sturdy shoes and comfortable slacks and jackets. Womyn wear shoes they can barely stand in, and hose and skirts that permit no body hair and limited sitting positions.

The attitude that our body hair and breasts are not supposed to be visible is totally connected to the idea that to have any safety, success or security we all have to fit into the white male corporate industrial unnatural system that destroys life.

Lynn

"Womyn need to stand up. We don't accept the rules. We know it's harasment and we reject it. It was important that there be a lot of people, but it made me feel vulnerable because it was so hard.

"The support of the people I was doing it with felt good, but the observers seemed so numb and unresponsive. They just stood there and watched, not supporting us through eye contact, verbally or by joining in, or at least it was rare.

"I was trying to make eye contact with the men. I felt they were not seeing me as a human being. They seemed amused by the whole thing and I wanted to make eye contact to let them know there is a human here. They just seemed to have vacant looks. I was trying to let them know I wasn't doing it for them. This statement was made, but a lot of people couldn't take it in. That was hard.

"It's a very important thing to me that my body should not be a shameful thing, and I get extremely angry and defiant about that — that it's a shameful thing to show your body. I've come across it before. This was such a blatant defiance that it was a real struggle to be in it.

"I guess I know for me, at least now, I won't do something like that again. Because it was completely draining for me, and I'm not interested in doing that to myself. I've realized I don't want to be in the public eye in that way. Why? It was emotionally draining but mostly it was the fact that I got a crank call afterwards and I don't want to open myself up to harasment in any way. Its hard because I do want to fight it, I want to fight the whole thing."

A womon who lives and works on the near east side